

THE JUNIOR MUSEUM AND ITS PROGRAM FOR
THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

By

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September 1957

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to the many persons whose assistance made this study possible. Sincere thanks are due Miss Margaret Emery, Mr. Lawrence Moitozo, Mr. Sam Smoker, Mr. Bert Walker, Miss Lola Eriksen, and Miss Josephine O'Hara, directors and former directors of junior museums in California for their help in preparing the questionnaire. Thanks are due also to Mr. John Ripley Forbes, secretary-director of the National Foundation for Junior Museums for his valuable information and suggestions; to the directors and other personnel of the many junior museums throughout the United States who participated in this study; and to Dr. Carl D. Duncan and to other colleagues on the San Jose State College faculty for their suggestions and encouragement.

To Dr. Paul DeH. Hurd and to Dr. Richard Gross for their guidance and helpful criticisms in the planning and writing of this dissertation; and especially to his wife, Clarice Wylie Gale, for her understanding and constant encouragement in the face of many discouragements, the writer wishes to express his deep gratitude.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the history of the junior museum in the United States and the relation of its program to the education of children. In all fairness, the study should begin with the work of Anna Billings Gallup, the woman who "took the museum out of its semi-sacred atmosphere and offered it to children as an adventure."¹

Miss Gallup was called in 1899 by the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences to help in the establishment of work for children. At the time, adult museum leaders had no clear notion of the function of an adult museum for the guidance and education of children. With no precedent to guide her, Miss Gallup was obliged to proceed experimentally. She declared that the interests and needs of children should be put first. Following the children about through the two old rooms that housed the exhibits of the budding museum, she listened to their questions and comments. As they expressed preferences, she made careful note and adapted her plans. The success of the project demonstrated her aptitude for the work and in 1902 Miss Gallup became curator in chief of the Brooklyn Children's Museum--then an adjunct of the Central Museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.

Miss Gallup realized that the development of the museum without

¹The New London, Connecticut Evening Day, October 22, 1956.

the widespread support of the citizens of the community, would be slow. Therefore, she appealed to Mrs. John Schoonhoven in 1916, asking her to form an auxiliary of women to help her in the realization of her dream for the Children's Museum. For twenty years--1916 to 1936--Miss Gallup and Mrs. Schoonhoven worked together to implement her philosophy of what a children's museum should be--a place where children should not just look, but feel free to participate in many kinds of interesting activities and adventures. Out of Miss Gallup's fertile imagination came the ideas that created a wonder world of human and natural history designed especially for children.

The response from fascinated children was immediate. They came to look, but, true to Miss Gallup's philosophy, stayed to learn and to seek participation in this new and exciting experience. The Brooklyn Children's Museum became the model for more than a hundred children's museums throughout the world; and Miss Gallup "acted as advisor for a number of . . . children's museums, including the one at Boston."²

She was honored in 1930 by the National Institute of Social Sciences for her "distinguished service to humanity."³ A second honor was accorded her in 1955, when, after a life rich in results in the lives of thousands of children, she "received from the National Foundation for Junior Museums the William T. Hornaday Gold Medal for extraordinary service and leadership in the junior museum field."⁴ At that time she was officially recognized as "Founder of the Children's

²Ibid.

³New Horizons, Fall 1956, p. 8.

⁴Ibid., p. 8.

Museum concept."⁵

Although the Brooklyn Children's Museum was founded in 1899, it was not until fifteen years later--in 1914--that a second children's museum--The Children's Museum at Boston, Massachusetts--was established. Children's Museum, Detroit Public Schools opened then in Detroit, Michigan in 1917; followed by the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Indiana in 1925 and the Hartford Children's Museum, Hartford, Connecticut in 1927.

Each of these pioneer museums--such as the ones in Brooklyn, under Anna Billings Gallup; in Boston, under Della Griffin; and in Indianapolis, under Arthur B. Carr--

. . . started out with their first collections consisting largely of mounted birds, minerals, shells, etc. . . . [and in every case were] . . . to fill a tremendous lack in the community and in the school systems where countless children were left without any real answers to their questions about the natural history around them.⁶

Since 1925, and principally since 1940, the junior museum movement has gone through a period of expansion until there were in 1956 more than eighty museums for children in the United States.

The greatest increase in the number of junior museums has been since 1944, following the incorporation of the William T. Hornaday Foundation. The Hornaday Foundation was organized in 1939 as a memorial to the late William T. Hornaday, one of America's great conservationists and for many years the director of the New York Zoological Society. It was organized by John Ripley Forbes, its present secretary-director.

One purpose of this organization, according to Forbes, is to en-

⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶ The New London, Connecticut Evening Day, op. cit.

courage the establishment of junior museums throughout the United States; and it is characteristic of the energy and enthusiasm of Forbes that he carried out this purpose by organizing five junior museums in Alabama, Tennessee, and Florida, while he was in the army during World War II.

The story of John Ripley Forbes has been told in detail in a thesis by Evelyn Carson⁷ and also in the Christian Science Monitor, October 25, 1947. The latter article also appeared in the Reader's Digest, December 1947.

Between 1944 and 1949, Forbes concentrated the work of the William T. Hornaday Foundation (now the National Foundation for Junior Museums) in the Southern states. From 1949 to 1956 the Foundation's efforts have been centered on the West coast--particularly in California--resulting in the establishment of several junior museums such as those located at Sacramento, San Jose, San Mateo, and San Rafael, California; also in the creation of the Pacific Association for Junior Museums, a regional affiliate of the National Foundation for Junior Museums. Recently Forbes moved his headquarters back to New York.

Forbes expressed his point of view regarding the development of the junior museum in America as follows: The junior museum movement has gone through three phases. During the first phase, which lasted until 1925, five junior museums were organized--in Brooklyn, Boston, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Hartford. The programs of these museums placed primary emphasis on natural history. The years from 1925 to 1939 constituted the second period of growth. In general, the programs of junior museums

⁷Evelyn M. Carson, "The Developing Junior Museum in California," Master of Arts thesis, Department of Art, San Jose State College, 1954, p. 62-70.

founded during this time were strongly influenced by those of the previous period. The beginning of the third phase was marked by the establishment of the William T. Hornaday Foundation, which, since its inception, has been promoting the organization of junior museums along regional lines--in the East, in the West, in the North Central states, and in the South Central states. This regional phase in the development of junior museums is still in progress. It is Forbes' hope that the movement will enter a national phase, during which time junior museums will be established in all parts of the country where they do not now exist.⁸ In its official publication, New Horizons, the National Foundation for Junior Museums reports that it is now actively sponsoring nine junior museums. Some of the junior museums that it has helped to found are located at:

San Jose, California
San Mateo, California
San Rafael, California
Durham, North Carolina
Rock Hill, South Carolina
Holtville, Alabama
Jacksonville, Florida
Fort Worth, Texas

Three other organizations have been instrumental in promoting junior museums. They are The Friends of Children's Museums, Inc.; the Children's Section, American Association of Museums; (both the result of the initiative of Anna Billings Gallup), and the Junior League.

The Friends of Children's Museums established and maintain the Children's Museum of the Brooklyn Home for Children and has advised a number of groups seeking to set up children's museums--such as those

⁸ Interview with John R. Forbes, Secretary-director of the National Foundation for Junior Museums.

at Leonia, New Jersey; New London, Connecticut; Cape Cod, Massachusetts; and Bay Village, Ohio. Its standards for the organization of children's museums have been expressed as follows:

The exhibits must be set up to arouse the interest and curiosity of children in the world of nature, in other peoples and lands, and in their own country and its history. They must stimulate the child's creative and manipulative skills through arts, crafts, and science, and create a desire on the part of children to participate in the activities, such as making bird houses, Indian masks, and starting rock, flower, or insect collections.⁹

The Children's Section, American Association of Museums, which was organized in 1938 with the help of Anna Billings Gallup, is another organization which is actively promoting junior museums in this country.

In many communities the Junior League has helped to organize and maintain junior museums. This aid has been chiefly in the form of money and volunteer help in setting up and implementing the program, and in furnishing transportation for children. In one case, a junior museum was called the Junior League Children's Museum for several years.

Since April 1938, the junior museum movement has spread outside of the United States; with the first junior museum founded at Kyoto, Japan in commemoration of the coronation of the emperor.¹⁰ A children's museum, which is eliciting much interest and assistance from the junior museums in the United States, was founded in April 1955 at Amreli, India.¹¹

Children's museums, junior museums, or youth museums, as they are

⁹Letter from Mrs. John Schoonhoven, Chairman of the Board, Friends of Children's Museums, Inc., January 8, 1957.

¹⁰Adelaide B. Sayles, The Story of the Children's Museum of Boston, (Boston: George H. Ellis, Inc., 1937), p. 65.

¹¹New Horizons, Winter 1957, p. 8.

variously called, have one characteristic which differentiates them from conventional museums--they are designed to further the interests and education of children. Their programs are planned and administered for children. Activities are child centered: exhibits and collections are determined by children's interests and housed in rooms or buildings set aside especially for them. Junior museums are specialized institutions that provide growing children with the laboratories and tools to explore the world about them. The first junior museums emphasized natural history; but collections and programs have since expanded to include social science and cultural history, industry, arts and crafts, and the physical sciences. However, since natural science is a ". . . subject which provides the greatest range of interests and which is in many ways the simplest to handle, most children's museums deal with the natural sciences."¹²

The majority of these museums were started under a sponsorship to

. . . provide places where children from six to sixteen can gratify their natural interests in the arts and sciences; where they can learn by doing; and undertake serious study in the guise of fun.¹³

In recent years programs have been expanded to include sick and handicapped children. "Touch tours" for blind children are a part of the program of the Nashville Children's Museum. Staff members of various museums take live materials to children in hospitals.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate the aims, organi-

¹²Henry L. Williams, "Children's Museums: What They Are and How To Organize Them," The Museum News, December 15, 1937, p. 7.

¹³Ibid., p. 7.

ization, and functions of the junior museum throughout the United States; particularly its relation to the education of children.

Significance of the Problem

The growth of the junior museum movement reflects the concern of communities for the welfare of their children. Civic leaders, school people, and parents are coming to realize that children need the specialized facilities, exhibits, programs, and activities, geared to their physical and mental development, which the junior museum can provide.

It is now generally recognized that:

1. The majority of conventional museums are not designed to cater to the needs of children. Exhibits are generally set up for adults; the atmosphere is normally hushed and quiet. There is usually little provision for giving children direct contacts with the things of the world about them. They need not only to see, but to touch, to taste, to smell, and to hear. "Both modern education and recreation lay stress on sensory development."¹⁴ The junior museum, with its live animals and plants, and its exhibits and collections that are within the child's understanding, together with its provision for the participation of children in various activities that emphasize sensory development, fills this need.
2. Most school systems do not have the necessary facilities or personnel for maintaining permanent exhibits, large numbers of living animals, and large and varied collections. The

¹⁴Eleanor M. Moore, Youth in Museums, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941), p. 8.

junior museum is able to take over this task and maintain a wealth of materials that schools can use.

Furthermore, many schools find it difficult to provide the special facilities or personnel to care for the needs of gifted children or of those in the very retarded group. This is another area in which the junior museum can and does serve a supplementary function. The San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum in California, for example, makes a special effort to provide a program and activities for gifted children.¹⁵

3. Where junior museums exist, the directors indicated that large numbers of children visit them to satisfy their interests in arts, crafts, and science. Children have a natural interest in the world around them. "All knowledge begins in wonder."¹⁶ They want to know the what, the how, and the why of things. The junior museum through its exhibits, clubs, games, and other activities, planned especially for children, provides one of the means whereby children learn to understand their environment and to develop wholesome interests.

Review of Research and Literature Related to the Problem

All available publications of junior museums and periodicals and all that could be found in the way of research literature or studies were

¹⁵ Interview with Lawrence Moitono, Director of the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum, San Jose, California.

¹⁶ H. D. McCracken, A Teacher's Manual and Science Handbook, to accompany The Seasons Pass, (Syracuse: L. W. Singer Co., Inc., 1947), p. 1.

examined. While considerable material in the way of publicity pamphlets, annual reports, and programs was secured from the different individual junior museums, it was found that very little had been published of a systematic research nature.

In reviewing the literature, no attempt has been made to select specific items. Rather, the purpose has been to give a general picture of the junior museum field. In order to determine the relation of the junior museum to the education of children, it was necessary to examine as many aspects of the organization, functions, and program as possible.

This section on review of research and literature related to the problem has been divided into three sections: surveys and research studies; general literature; and periodicals and pamphlets.

Surveys and Research Studies

In 1940 Eleanor M. Moore from the University Museum, Philadelphia, on a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, visited over one hundred museums throughout the United States and Canada, including both adult museums with children's departments and distinctly children's museums. On her return she published Youth in Museums,¹⁷ a general review of the work for young people carried on through museums in the United States and Canada.

Moore had difficulty in determining the number of children's museums because (1) many of them had been unstable and closed down soon after opening and (2) because there was a difference of opinion as to what constituted a children's museum. Although a children's museum has

¹⁷Moore, op. cit.

a "physical set-up of objects (1) selected for children; (2) exhibited for children; (3) interpreted for children; (4) in a place set aside for children,"¹⁸ she said that "by these standards alone the use of the name is justified but these alone do not entirely distinguish a children's museum."¹⁹ For the distinguishing characteristics of a children's museum Moore quoted Mrs. William Lloyd Garrison 3rd, Curator in Chief of the Brooklyn Children's Museum:

The answer is not simple. It lies in a combination of elements, which, fused together, create the spirit that makes a children's museum. It is found in the selection of objects and other visual aids. It is influenced by the physical techniques of installation, lighting, and labels. Most of all, it is dependent upon the way in which the child is introduced to his material.²⁰

Moore's list of museums carrying on work with children included some--still active--that are not included in either the published lists of junior museums given by the American Association of Museums or by the National Foundation for Junior Museums; and left out many that are included in the lists of these two organizations.

While junior museums were specialized, she found that the

. . . majority, however, pursue activities of a very general nature, leaning more perhaps toward natural science and depending somewhat for their scope on the extent of their budgets and the needs of the communities contributing to their support.²¹

Children's museums are but one of the community agencies that minister to the needs and development of children. To justify their existence as separate entities, junior or children's museums should

¹⁸Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 5.

²⁰Ibid., p. 5.

²¹Ibid., p. 4.

supplement, not duplicate, the work of existing community agencies.

They should be doing what these existing community agencies are not doing or cannot do for children. Moore felt that, because of their flexibility, junior museums are cooperating with—and not overlapping—the work of schools, playgrounds, libraries, etc.

Moore found only two museums giving courses for prospective museum workers—the Buffalo Museum of Science and the Newark Museum. She also found that the salaries of museum directors were low; which, of course, added to the difficulties of finding museum staff members.

In line with their efforts to make children resourceful and independent, Moore found that a number of junior museums, notably those in Indianapolis, Indiana and Palo Alto, California, were giving children the opportunity to participate in planning museum activities through children's advisory boards. In others—such as Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland, and the Nelson Gallery, Kansas City, Missouri—children lead groups on conducted tours.

In 1940 Moore found a rather general concern among junior museum directors over the small attendance of young people of high school age. Various reasons were given to explain this: "(1) an inflexible school program . . . ; (2) a natural growing-up phase that offers other interests; /and/ (3) the wrong type of activity offered in museums."²²

An important phase of a museum's work is the guidance of classes of school children on conducted tours through the museum. This is also true of most junior museums. Moore found that cooperation between schools

²² Ibid., p. 56.

and junior museums was sometimes so close that, in some cases, paid school personnel were on the staff of the museum. In other cases, such as the Worcester Art Museum, teachers and museum staff members worked together on programs, demonstrations, lectures, etc., for the schools.

One of the perennial problems of children's museums is that of finding money with which to pay salaries and operating expenses.

Solutions have been many and varied. Some junior museums are maintained through boards of education (Arden-Carmichael Conservation Center, Carmichael, California); others, by parent museums or parks (Wildcat Canyon Nature Lodge, Tilden Regional Parks, Berkeley, California). Moore found that the majority, however, are independent corporations depending on contributions for their existence.

"Junior Museums with Special Reference to Bridgeport, Connecticut's Wonder Workshop Museum," a Master of Science paper written by Dorothy Tappe at Cornell University in 1953, dealt with the junior museum at Bridgeport, Connecticut; but the implications for junior museums in general are significant.

Tappe felt that junior museums serve a valuable democratic purpose in the development and education of children because they are child centered with "no special privileges for class, creed, or color."²³ Furthermore, they meet the child at his own level and give him a sense of belonging and proprietorship in an enterprise that is "his." Here, in an atmosphere that is relaxed and informal, he can increase his knowledge of the world around him through educational play and learn to

²³Dorothy Tappe, "Junior Museums, with Special Reference to Bridgeport, Connecticut's Wonder Workshop Museum," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Education, Cornell University, 1953, p. 2.

"subjugate his individual will to the common interests and welfare of the group."²⁴

Bridgeport is an industrial city. It was because of the difficulty encountered in getting children out into the country that the Junior League undertook the task of organizing a junior museum to "give children something of their natural heritage by bringing part of the world inside of the four brick walls for them."²⁵ The museum opened May 1, 1952 in the basement of a library.

Wonder Workshop Junior Museum of Bridgeport, Connecticut works in four areas: Nature, art, science, and ethnology. Children pay a fee of twenty-five cents per year for membership in the museum and one of the three age group clubs. In summer field trips are taken into the country. Effort is made to cooperate with the program of the local schools as closely as possible.

Tappe stated that some of the weak areas in the program of junior museums are: (1) Tendency to use too much exotic material rather than material from the children's own environments; (2) the need for more field excursions, or, if these are not possible, more yard space around the museum for insect hunting, gardening, bird study, etc.; (3) lack of provision for small details that will catch the attention of children such as labels and electric game indicators; (4) tendency to "talk down to children";²⁶ (5) failure to put children first in preparing displays or exhibits or in other parts of the museum program; and (6) insufficient

²⁴Ibid., p. 3.

²⁵Ibid., p. 11.

²⁶Ibid., p. 36.

funds for an adequate staffing.

A Master of Arts thesis was completed in 1954 at San Jose State College by Evelyn M. Carson, entitled, "The Developing Junior Museum in California." In the chapter, "Function of the Junior Museum," Carson reviewed the various concepts for the term junior museum. After considering the definitions of Brayton, Coleman, and Moore, she agreed with Moore that the term junior museum does not necessarily limit the organization; but "it does necessitate a physical set-up of objects (1) selected for children; (2) exhibited for children; (3) interpreted for children; (4) in a place set aside for children."²⁷

Like Moore, Carson found it difficult to determine the number of junior museums. She felt that this was due to the fact that so many new ones are being established and because there is a lack of standardization for junior museums.

Carson selected for her study four independent junior museums in California--the Palo Alto Junior Museum, Palo Alto, California; the Josephine D. Randall Junior Museum, San Francisco, California; the California Junior Museum, Sacramento, California; and the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum, San Jose, California. Other California junior museums were not included because "they are sponsored by parent institutions or are departments or divisions of the sponsoring institutions."²⁸ Each of these selected junior museums was discussed as to its organization and history, current plan of administration, current organization of activities, work with schools, exhibits, and public

²⁷Moore, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁸Carson, op. cit., p. 16.